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SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

EEB/IFD/OIA FOR DAN JACOBS  
USTR FOR JASON BUNTIN AND JONATHAN KALLMER

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [EINV](#) [ECIN](#) [ETRD](#) [INRB](#) [QA](#)  
SUBJECT: QATAR READY FOR BILATERAL INVESTMENT TREATY  
NEGOTIATIONS

REF: 2008 DOHA 650

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(SBU) KEY POINTS  
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-- The Ministry of Business and Trade has reviewed the U.S. model Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) and is prepared for initial negotiations soon.

-- The Cabinet's support of a BIT (in principle) make this the most fruitful area for cooperation now, though a free trade agreement could be considered in the future, if the BIT process proceeds well.

-- The Ministry could tentatively accommodate a USG negotiating team in late February or early March.

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(SBU) COMMENT AND ACTION REQUEST  
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-- The Ministry is showing a level of seriousness on the BIT which has not been in evidence before. The sooner the USG can engage Qatar in the new administration the better. If a late February-early March timeframe for BIT negotiations in either Doha or Washington is acceptable to State and USTR, please provide a proposal soonest so that Post can follow up with the Ministry to lock in a date for an initial negotiation.

End Key Points and Comment.

1. (SBU) During a January 13 meeting at the Ministry of Business and Trade, Director of Economic Affairs Saoud Al-Jufairi told P/E Chief Rice and Econoff Fabrycky that his staff had completed its preliminary review of the U.S. model Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) text and hopes to start negotiations soon. He reiterated that he has Cabinet authorization to pursue an agreement and the Minister is fully supportive. Moreover, his ministry sees a BIT as a good start which could eventually lay the framework for an FTA. (Also participating in the meeting was Hassan Ali Al-Haddad, head of the ministry's Agreements and International Economic Relations section.)

2. (SBU) Al-Jufairi noted that his staff had gone through the U.S. model text and compared it with investment agreements Qatar has with other countries. The U.S. text appeared to be similar to an agreement they have signed (though not yet officially ratified) with the Netherlands, and so far he has not identified any major problem areas. Dutch officials had also indicated to their Qatari counterparts, he said, that a U.S. agreement, in the Dutch experience, would be similar. Al-Jufairi noted he was continuously busy with a host of

multilateral initiatives and preparations for the Amir's upcoming visits to Latin America and Europe, but he is prepared to sit with U.S. officials for an initial round of negotiations.

13. (SBU) Right now, late February or early March look best for Al-Jufairi and others at the ministry to either receive a negotiating team or travel to Washington for negotiations.

LeBaron